

SKAGIT VALLEY BEEKEEPERS



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March 2010

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The meeting for March will be our usual Spring Potluck Dinner. The actual street address is 700 Pacific, just off State Street, the Sedro-Woolley Senior Center. There is a map on the last page of this newsletter for new folks. Plan on meeting about 6:00 PM to meet and greet then have dinner. There will be a silent auction so bring your check book. Bring the best dish of your choice. I always bring my own plate and utensils although there always seems to be paper plates and cutlery provided. I have learned to bring a labeled thrift shop server for whatever dish I choose to provide. It saves some running around. There will be a ham provided, also as is usual. Our speaker will be Tyler Clark, a local seedsman who now works for VICIMA, a European seed company which operates in the Valley.

Remember it is time for yearly dues and magazine subscriptions as you choose. These can be paid at the Potluck.

You may remember that last meeting we were instructed on the new pest, the spotted wing drosophila. After hearing this and seeing fruit flies on my school bus two weeks

ago, I thought "what the heck is this" and went to talk to a local berry grower about what he plans to do. He says they just have to monitor closely with traps. They were spraying when I talked to him then but that is not new. It looks to some folks like there will be pockets of this bug in various locations around the Valley and they have no idea where they might be but not necessarily everywhere. They just don't know yet. I do know there are some fancy, new, over the row, high dollar spray rigs parked around LaConner.

The UC Davis newsletter from Dr. Eric Mussen in California confirms what Ron Babcock told us about bee losses in CA just prior to almond bloom. Strong hives trucked to California in preparation for pollination have died by the thousands, CCD again. I have heard some folks on Vancouver Island are in trouble too but I'm not sure.



Bring cookies A-L

This newsletter is on-line.
Please e-mail your e-ddress

Our hives should be building well now. I hope you have pulled a lid or two to closely check what is happening. Do you have a decent population? Are your queens laying? Just look for eggs! Is there enough feed even if it is raining.? Producing brood is a heavy lifting task that requires strong stores. I started feeding thin 2:1 sugar syrup in feed buckets I made, fed from the top through the inner cover hole. The apiarists in BC recommend warm thick syrup. I think bees take top cover syrup better than other ways this time of year. I have pollen patties on even though the bees are bringing in lots of pollen and will add more. When we get to buttercup time your bees can starve so be prepared then too. That will get here quicker than you think this year.

It is not too early to check for varroa mites! Get them early and often as necessary! I believe that and clean new combs are our best strategies for strong, healthy bees.

Swarming is just around the corner for your strongest hives. Have you planned for that? There are many strategies which will help prevent swarming. The best strategy may be young queens and plenty of room for them to lay. You can make splits and then double back your new hive just before blackberries. You need to give that some thought before it happens. If they do swarm, what then? Do you have another box or two with frames

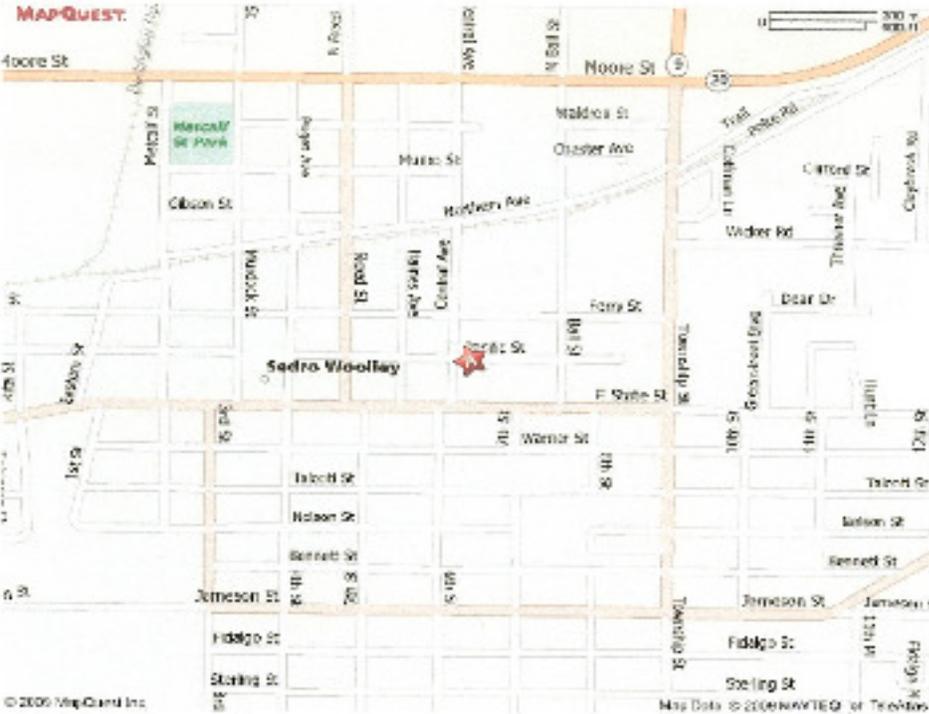
a lid and bottom board? Will you have some feed to help them out?

I plan to rotate out old comb and burn it. As far as I know it cannot be made clean enough again for foundation so it is better to destroy it. It sure starts a good fire to burn tree prunings!

The Association has plans for raising queens this year. We will need help in this. Bill Markus will also be holding classes for new beekeepers. You might consider reading the apprentice program booklet and taking the test. Is an open book test, fairly basic and informational. I did it. It was worth it! \$10 for materials. Special diploma too!

Plan for a very dry summer to go with our dry warm winter. You may have to wash your car in the vegetable garden to get the carrots watered if water restrictions are needed. It will be hard to make honey if it is like last summer. Glory in your tomatoes, I guess. I have the garden rototilled here and my brother in Wasilla, AK says they are having another big snow storm.

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The Center is an odd place to find. You almost think you are in an alley. The parking is in the center of several small city buildings all of whose doors face into a parking lot, not State Street. See Plaid Phone Book page 23 G-4